

# **ASH AND DEBRIS CLEANUP GUIDANCE**

**Issued by the  
County of San Diego and  
the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board**

**October 28, 2003**

Due to the recent fires, the San Diego Region is experiencing significant ash and debris deposition. County public health officials are recommending residents and businesses avoid using cleanup methods that may create additional health risks by re-suspending ash and particulate matter.

Although health protection should always remain the first concern during cleanup, it's also important to try and minimize the amount of runoff containing ash and debris that enters the storm water conveyance system (e.g., streets, gutters, culverts, and ditches). This ash and debris will ultimately be discharged untreated into creeks, bays, lagoons, and the ocean, where it can be detrimental to public and environmental health. To protect both public health and the environment, the County and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board are providing the guidance below for use while cleaning up ash and debris.

This guidance will be posted on both the County of San Diego, Department of Public Works (<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/stormwater.html>) and Regional Water Quality Control Board (<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb9/>) websites. It should be noted that these guidelines apply only during the current emergency situation; additional requirements regarding discharges to the storm water conveyance system apply under normal conditions. During the fires, many areas of the County are also under restricted water usage; some clean-up efforts may need to be delayed until these restrictions are removed.

## **Outdoor Clean-up**

1. Try to wait until ash has stopped falling before cleaning up. This will limit the number of cleanup efforts needed, which can help reduce the amount of wash water entering storm water conveyance systems and receiving waters.
2. As a first step for cleaning, try to determine if ash and debris can be contained and cleaned up without washing the material into the storm water conveyance system. Wet clean up methods to consider include:
  - a. Wash ash and debris into landscaped areas wherever possible;
  - b. Use a damp mop to clean up ash and debris from small areas, such as patios;
  - c. Dampen accumulated ash and debris and scrape it up or vacuum it up using an adequate filtering vacuum;

- d. Clean your car by taking it to a car wash, or wash the car over a vegetated area such as your lawn; and
  - e. If washing roof areas, redirect downspouts to landscaped areas.
3. If the above methods cannot be used, and washing of ash and debris to the storm water conveyance system is necessary, use as little water as possible and try to filter the wash water before it enters the storm water conveyance system. Place gravel bags, filter fabric, fiber rolls, etc., in front of storm drains to capture ash and debris. Scoop up captured ash and debris and dispose of appropriately.

### **Interior Clean-up**

Minimize re-suspending settled dust when cleaning interior areas by using wet methods or adequate filtering vacuums. Typical household vacuums may pickup and re-suspend settled dust.

1. For carpets, use of a high efficiency, HEPA-type vacuum is recommended.
2. Use a damp cloth to pick-up dust and trap it on the cloth for small horizontal surfaces. Clean the cloth in water as needed; dispose of it to the trash when it becomes too dirty for continued use. Dispose of dirty water into the sewer system.
3. For non-porous surfaces like tile or vinyl floors, use a damp mop to trap the dust. Clean the mop as needed in water, and dispose of dirty water into the sewer system.

### **Other Issues**

1. Construction, industrial, and other facilities operating under a permit with the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board should implement their Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs), or equivalent plans, to the extent possible when dealing with ash and debris cleanup. Where following a SWPPP or other plan is not possible, the above guidance should be used.
2. If pools are to be drained for cleaning, the pool water should be free of chlorine residual and should have low copper sulfate concentrations.

For additional information regarding requirements for water quality protection during both emergency and non-emergency conditions, contact the Regional Stormwater Hotline at 1-888-846-0800.